



Written by Courtney Coonrod

Andy Paiko is an innovative artist who uses glass to express his individuality. His goal as an artist is to examine the role of glass in relation to its function, revealing his incredible fascination of the glass blowing process. In order to reach his goal, Paiko uses the forms and functions of glass to create objects that try to achieve a purpose. Paiko goes above and beyond the limits of glassblowing; adding limitless layers to the glass until art is made.



How did you get into making glass objects?

I started out just like everyone else beginning to learn the craft, making cups and bowls and vases and other sculptural vessels, struggling to control the medium. A college professor urged me to consider making things that were more sculptural, more idea-based. After making a glass hammer and enjoying the irony and visual dissonance of that object, things just got more interesting and complicated. The number of things to make out of glass is unlimited.

What process do you go through when creating your work?

Every piece is different, and usually I am working on several projects at once. Some commissions are straightforward, other personal projects are open-ended or technical and need more time to develop. Sometimes I make a mock-up out of wood to work out proportions. Deciding where to start is critical. Then it's just a matter of spending time in the hotshop to shape the glass, and then taking the parts back to the cold-studio for grinding, polishing, fitting, etching, assembling, and composing. I think of it as 3-D collage.



Your screens are absolutely stunning; what gave you the idea to create such elegant ornamentation?

The original idea for the Optic Screen series was a collaboration with local Portland, OR designer Jessica Helgerson and her team at Jessica Helgerson Interior Design. They do outrageously beautiful work. She had a clients' office that required a visual and spatial divider that would allow for light and acoustic permeability. I came up with a hanging system and we worked out some fun shapes and it went from there. Each screen is modular- all the elements can be reconfigured in any way to fill any space.



Your chandeliers are breathtaking! What shapes and designs do you decide to incorporate and why? The base plate is also very interesting; the chandelier flows perfectly away from it. What medium do you use for it?

Each composition is a dialogue between the elements to form what might be compared to a poem or a piece of music. I lay out all the parts and juxtapose them carefully in the hope of creating a visual tension overall. The base plate, or canopy, is laser-cut steel, and designed to be able to be modular as well. Each “leaf” can be rotated in any direction to create a repeating (or non-repeating) pattern in any linear dimension, and the glass elements can be affixed anywhere within the field.



The one-of-a-kind pieces are so detailed and unique; do all of the objects work? The seismograph and balance are very impressive; what inspired you to make them? How do you make the glass objects perform certain tasks (such as record motion)?

Most of the objects do have varying degrees of functionality. The seismograph would be able to record an earthquake big enough to knock it off the table. While I don't have a background in engineering, it does seem that there is a part of my brain that wants to break things down into their component parts and put them back together. There is a lot of measuring involved! It is functionality in relation to the material characteristics of glass, especially its assumed fragility, that is central to that body of work.



The bell jars and reliquaries are sophisticated, yet practical. How do you decide the designs for the handles of the jars?

Those types of sculptural vessels interest me because it is the space inside the vessel that determines its functionality, rather than the vessel itself. In this case, the function is to take an object out of its natural context and place it in a confined area of contemplation and study, to elevate it into the realm of “sacred”. The handles and decorative finials on the jars are simply a result of playing around in the hotshop, layering techniques and processes to create an optical density I find pleasurable.

Are you currently working on anything?

Of course!!! I just shipped a large hanging sculpture to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for a group show called “Crafted: Objects in Flux.” I have a private commission for a large chandelier here in Portland. The Wexler Gallery is asking to show new work of mine at SOFA Chicago and perhaps SALON NY, if I have time to make some new work! I was also nominated for the Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award!

